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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 001353

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: CJCS GENERAL PACE MEETING WITH FM ASO

11. (C) SUMMARY: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Pace, in a meeting with Foreign Minister Aso on March 21, emphasized the importance of the alliance realignment agreement, the value of Japan's continued contributions to Iraq and Indian Ocean operations, and explained he will visit China March 22 in an effort to improve communications with the Chinese military.

Aso said that:

-- concrete progress is being made on the implementation of U.S.-Japan force realignment;

-- the Japanese government is seeking Diet approval of a two-year extension of their current troop deployment to support Iraq efforts;

-- North Korea's stance in the Six-Party Talks has become "more constructive";

-- he hopes the U.S. will "not forget" security problems in Asia posed by North Korea and China's rapid military modernization and internal troubles. END SUMMARY.

Realignment: concrete progress

12. (C) In a March 21 meeting with visiting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Peter Pace, Foreign Minister Taro Aso said concrete progress is being made in the implementation of the U.S.-Japan agreement on force realignment. Legislation to fund realignment moves, including the transfer of 8,000 Marines and their dependents to Guam, is making its way through the Diet. This week, after the Upper House completes debate on the legislation, it should move to the Lower House, he said. Agreement on the relocation of F-15 training from Okinawa to mainland Japan is also an example of forward progress. The new Okinawa governor is "stubborn but reliable," and easier to work with than his predecessor. He noted Japan's appreciation for the U.S. military's efforts to build positive base-community relations, especially in Okinawa.

13. (C) General Pace replied that the realignment agreement is an important sign of the U.S. commitment to "continue to be the closest of partners" with Japan. The move of some Marines to Guam will enhance the long-term strength of the alliance, he said. Keeping those forces in the region will make U.S. security commitments clear to friends and potential enemies alike. He noted plans to visit Guam on his way back

from China the following week.

Iraq: seeking two-year extension of SDF deployment

¶4. (C) Aso thanked General Pace for America's efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, "at the precious cost of your servicemen and women." Echoing press comments made by Prime Minister Abe the previous day, he said the Japanese government will seek Diet approval for a two-year extension of the current deployment of Air Self-Defense Force C-130 aircraft in support of Iraq operations.

¶5. (C) General Pace stressed the value of the contributions of Japanese forces in Iraq and the Indian Ocean. In Iraq, continued airlift support is "extremely helpful", and the Ground Self-Defense Force reconstruction team in Samawah had been "highly respected" by local Iraqis. Ongoing oiler support for coalition vessels in the Indian Ocean is also "critically important."

"Don't forget Asia"

¶6. (C) Problems in the Middle East were pressing, but "please don't forget Asia", urged Aso. Unlike Europe, the Cold War has never ended in Northeast Asia, which still suffered from instability driven by North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and China's "rapid and opaque" military build-up. For the last 19 years, China's defense spending has risen at double-digit rates, and was likely to keep growing. All this underscores the need to further strengthen the deterrent capability of the U.S.-Japan alliance, he said, stressing that Prime Minister Abe shared this view with equal conviction.

North Korea: "becoming more constructive"

¶7. (C) On North Korea, it sometimes seems only Japan and the U.S. are paying attention, said Aso. He recalled a G-8 Ministerial in Moscow in early 2006 at which Japan had sounded warnings about North Korea that other countries had "ignored", focusing instead on discussion of Iran's nuclear program. Later that year, after North Korea's missile launches and nuclear test, he had told Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in a telephone call that "he should have listened."

¶8. (C) Recent progress in the Six-Party Talks is cause for "some hope," said Aso. China and Russia seem to have moved closer to the U.S. and Japanese position, he commented. As a result, Pyongyang seems to be "becoming more constructive." The North Koreans are unpredictable, however, and skepticism is unavoidable, he said.

¶9. (C) General Pace reassured Aso that North Korea's nuclear and missile programs "have got (America's) attention," and have reinforced to U.S. decision-makers the importance of a close U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S. and Japan need to work "as closely as possible" on missile defense and information-sharing to respond to North Korea's weapons programs, he said.

China: doubts over CCP control of military

¶10. (C) Departing from his scripted talking points, Aso spoke at length on his concerns about China. Personally, he has doubts that the ruling Chinese Communist Party has full control over the country's military. There were worrying signs that the China's political leadership had not known in advance about the January anti-satellite (ASAT) missile test, nor about the transit of a nuclear-powered Chinese submarine through Japanese territorial waters in 2004. Japan suffered a similar rift between politicians and the military in the run-up to World War II, he said.

¶11. (C) There are signs of serious internal problems in China, observed Aso, citing statistics on the frequency of incidents of civil unrest -- 74,000 in 2006, and 85,000 in ¶2005. China might eventually split into more than one country, becoming "a United States of China, or perhaps a (Chinese) CIS", and triggering a wave of refugees. China's economy is certainly booming, but growth is benefiting people in distorted ways. One example is the creation of a narrow class of very rich people who, he laughingly said, "don't know how to waste money wisely," snapping up "huge motorboats" and other luxuries.

¶12. (C) General Pace emphasized that he saw a stop in Japan as essential before visiting China on March 22. The goal of his visit to China is to overcome some of the opaqueness and uncertainty about the country's military intentions. Unlike a close ally like Japan, there is very little daily contact between U.S. and Chinese military officers, he noted. It is important, at his level, to make an effort to expand that interaction.

¶13. (C) General Pace acknowledged concerns over China's military modernization, saying the U.S. is uncertain of how much Beijing spends on defense beyond what it announced publicly. In military terms, he explained, a "threat" involves both capability and intent. While China's military capability is expanding, it is difficult to divine the country's long-term intent. It is the U.S. military's job to be ready to respond if needed, "without making assumptions about anyone's intent." Personally, he said, he is optimistic that economic progress will help steer China's intentions in a positive direction.

¶14. (U) General Pace cleared this message.
SCHIEFFER